

5554

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
RELEASE IN FULL 1998

RESPECTIVE REARMAMENT

I. The Soviet Union nearly has restored Arab\* arms inventories to their pre-June 1967 levels and has greatly increased its technical assistance to the Arab armed forces. Despite Arab improvements, notably in aircraft and air defense, the Israelis hold -- and probably will retain for the next year at least -- an overall military advantage.

A. Soviet military deliveries in 1968 have approximated the pre-war rate, far below the peak reached in the months immediately following the June war. This slowdown reflects both the near completion of resupply and the limitations on Arab capabilities to absorb additional equipment.

B. To date, the Soviets have replaced almost all of the major combat equipment lost by the Arab countries, including virtually all of the jet fighters and bombers, although the level of resupply varies from country to country.

C. In the next year or so, Soviet deliveries probably will bring Arab weapons inventories somewhat above pre-war levels.

1. Completion of deliveries under agreements signed before and immediately after the June war would virtually restore the pre-war inventory levels.

---

\* This assessment applies to Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Iraq, and Jordan as a group. Jordan, however, has not received any arms from the USSR.

~~TOP SECRET~~  
~~TOP SECRET~~

2. Agreements signed in the late summer with the UAR and possibly other Arab countries are the basis for some expansion of inventories -- especially of aircraft -- beyond pre-war levels.

D. No new types of major military equipment are known to have been delivered that were not already in Arab inventories or earmarked for delivery prior to the June war. There are, however, unconfirmed reports that Western observers recently sighted SCUD ballistic missiles in the UAR.

E. Improvements in Arab, notably Egyptian, air defense capabilities through hardened shelters for fighters, and additional airfields, low-altitude radar, and conventional AAA have reduced vulnerability to the kind of devastating first strike the Israelis achieved in the June war.

F. Shortcomings in armed forces training and leadership continue to be the most serious drawback in Arab military capabilities vis-a-vis Israel.

1. Corrective actions will be slow in producing results despite the large infusion of Soviet military assistance personnel who now total about 4,500, about triple the number present prior to the June war.

2. These advisors are largely concentrated in the UAR (2,000), Algeria (1,150), and Syria (1,100).

~~TOP SECRET~~

II. Soviet fleet and air visits and the use of Arab facilities since the war add to the dimensions of Soviet presence and support for the Arabs.

A. Since June 1967, Soviet fleet units have made prolonged visits to Alexandria and Port Said in the UAR as well as frequent visits to Latakia in Syria. In addition, Soviet TU-16 jet medium bombers have made flights to the UAR and Syria.

1. These visits provide visible evidence of Soviet support for the Arabs, and serve as a deterrent to Israeli attacks against port and other facilities where the Soviets are present.

2. There is evidence that the Soviets have used Egyptian facilities for intelligence activities in the area.

B. The Soviet Union is using selected facilities in the UAR for support of its fleet operations, although it apparently is not interested in establishing formal base rights.

1. These facilities include a fuel storage site at Port Said, and a naval repair facility at Alexandria.

2. The Soviets reportedly are overseeing the operation of the Al-Kabbari ship construction and repair facilities at Alexandria, and will purchase some of the commercial vessels the yard produces.

III. The military resupply situation in the individual Arab countries shapes up briefly as follows:

A. Egypt, the major Arab military contender, has restored its jet fighter inventory to almost 85 percent of its pre-war level and now has hardened shelters for virtually all its fighters. Its bomber and ground equipment strength approaches pre-June levels. Naval strength has been augmented through replacement of some older destroyers and submarines and through increased holdings of guided missile patrol boats. Both air and coastal defenses have been improved.

B. Syria has 116 jet fighters compared with its pre-war 85 and can house all its jet fighters in hardened shelters. Losses in tanks and most other ground force equipment have been largely replaced.

C. Algeria has replaced all 41 of the jet fighters and 7 of the 12 light bombers sent to the UAR during the June hostilities. The 50 tanks transferred to the UAR in June have been replaced and inventories of these and other ground forces equipment are approximately the same as pre-war.

D. Iraq now has 130 jet fighters compared to a pre-war total of 95. Most other categories of military equipment also are estimated to be above pre-war levels -- in part a result of continued deliveries under pre-war agreements.

~~TOP SECRET~~

E. Jordan, seriously weakened by the war and post war actions, has shunned Soviet arms aid offers and remains significantly weaker than before the war. Its fighter strength has been cut in half, it has 100 fewer tanks, and decidedly smaller amounts of artillery and other ground forces equipment.

1, November 1968

~~TOP SECRET~~